

## CLAIMS

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

- 1 1. A method for establishing a distribution network, comprising:
  - 2       establishing a first distributor of content capable of distributing said
  - 3       content via transmission of an electronic signal; and
  - 4       providing a first benefit to said first distributor as a result of said first
  - 5       distributor establishing a second distributor of said content.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said establishing a first distributor of content capable of distributing said content via transmission of an electronic signal includes at least one of the following:
  - 4       providing a notification of availability of said benefit to said first distributor;
  - 5       receiving a request from said first distributor to act as a distributor of said content;
  - 6       registering said first distributor as part of a distribution network for said content;
  - 7       receiving approval from a provider of said content to allow said first distributor to act as a distributor of said content;
  - 8       granting a license to said first distributor to act as a distributor of said content; and
  - 9       providing data to said first distributor indicative of said benefit.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
  - 2       providing said content to said first distributor.

1    4.     The method of claim 3, wherein said providing said content to said first  
2 distributor includes at least one of the following:  
3                 emailing said content to said first distributor;  
4                 instructing another distributor in said network to provide said content to  
5 said first distributor;  
6                 allowing said first distributor to retrieve said content;  
7                 providing data to said first distributor indicative of a location where said  
8 content is located;  
9                 providing data to said first distributor indicative of a location where said  
10 content can be retrieved by said first distributor;  
11                 providing a key to said first distributor that enables use of said content;  
12 and  
13                 providing a key to said first distributor that enables decryption of said  
14 content.

1    5.     The method of claim 1, wherein said providing a first benefit to said first  
2 distributor includes at least one of the following:  
3                 providing an indication to said first distributor of said first benefit;  
4                 applying the first benefit during a transaction involving said first  
5 distributor;  
6                 providing an instruction to a party to provide said first benefit to said first  
7 distributor; and  
8                 providing instructions to said first distributor regarding how said first  
9 distributor can receive said first benefit.

1    6.     The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                 providing said first distributor with a second benefit as a result of said  
3 second distributor establishing a third distributor of said content.

1    7.    The method of claim 6, further comprising:

2                 providing said second distributor with a benefit as a result of said second  
3                 distributor establishing a third distributor of said content.

1    8.    The method of claim 6, wherein said third distributor receives said content from  
2    said first distributor.

1    9.    The method of claim 6, wherein said third distributor receives said content from  
2    said second distributor.

1    10.   The method of claim 1, wherein said second distributor is capable of distributing  
2    said content via transmission of an electronic signal.

1    11.   The method of claim 1, wherein said content is in electronic format.

1    12.   The method of claim 1, wherein said content includes at least one of the  
2    following:

3                 educational information;  
4                 an advertisement;  
5                 a survey;  
6                 a question;  
7                 an animation;  
8                 a sound file;  
9                 a music file;  
10                a real-time feed of information;  
11                streaming video;  
12                streaming audio;  
13                a movie file;  
14                software;

15           a video clip;  
16           a multimedia file;  
17           an image;  
18           text material; and  
19           rich media.

1     13.    The method of claim 1, wherein said first benefit is based, at least in part, on at  
2    least one of the following:

3               an amount per distribution of said content by said first distributor to  
4    another distributor;  
5               an amount per distribution of said content by said second distributor;  
6               an amount of content distributed by said second distributor;  
7               an type of content distributed by said second distributor;  
8               storage capacity of said second distributor;  
9               physical location of said second distributor;  
10              availability of said second distributor; and  
11               amount of access of said second distributor by potential recipients of said  
12   content.

1     14.    The method of claim 1, wherein said first benefit is based, at least in part, on at  
2    least one of the following:

3               an amount of content distributed by said first distributor;  
4               a type of content distributed by said first distributor;  
5               storage capacity of said first distributor;  
6               physical location of said first distributor;  
7               availability of said first distributor;  
8               amount of access of said first distributor by potential recipients of said  
9   content; and

10                   an amount per distribution of said content by said first distributor to a  
11                   recipient of said content.

1     15.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                   allowing said first distributor to provide said content to said second  
3                   distributor.

1     16.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                   receiving said content.

1     17.   The method of claim 1, wherein said first distributor is part of a network of at  
2                   least one distributor for said content.

1     18.   The method of claim 1, wherein said first benefit includes at least one of the  
2                   following:  
3                   a monetary amount;  
4                   a discount applicable towards purchase of said content;  
5                   a discount applicable towards a cost of a license to use said content;  
6                   a non-monetary amount;  
7                   a coupon; and  
8                   frequent flyer miles.

1     19.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                   providing to said first distributor an indication of a desired attribute for a  
3                   new distributor of said content.

1     20.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                   determining at least one desired attribute for a new distributor of said  
3                   content.

1    21.    The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                 determining at least one attribute of said content.

1    22.    The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                 notifying said first distributor of an availability of said first benefit prior to  
3                 said establishing a first distributor of content.

1    23.    The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                 notifying said first distributor of an availability of said first benefit prior to  
3                 said providing a benefit to said first distributor as a result of said first distributor  
4                 establishing a second distributor of said content.

1    24.    The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                 providing said content to said second distributor.

1    25.    The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                 receiving a notification from said first distributor that said first distributor  
3                 has established said second distributor.

1    26.    The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                 monitoring performance of said first distributor.

1    27.    The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                 monitoring performance of said second distributor.

1    28.    The method of claim 1, further comprising at least one of the following:  
2                 receiving a payment for said content from a recipient of said content;  
3                 receiving a payment for said content from said first distributor; and  
4                 receiving a payment for said content from said second distributor.

1    29. A method for participating in a distribution network, comprising:  
2                 establishing at least one distributor of content; and  
3                 receiving a benefit based, at least in part, on said establishing at least one  
4                 distributor of said content.

1    30. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2                 receiving said content.

1    31. The method of claim 30, wherein said receiving said content includes at least one  
2                 of the following:  
3                 receiving said content via transmission of an electronic signal;  
4                 receiving said content via transmission of a wireless signal;  
5                 receiving said content from another distributor of said content;  
6                 receiving data indicative of a location where said content is located;  
7                 receiving data indicative of a location from which said content is  
8                 retrievable; and  
9                 receiving a key that enables decryption of said content.

1    32. The method of claim 29, wherein said establishing at least one distributor of said  
2                 content includes at least one of the following:  
3                 receiving a request from a party to act as a distributor of said content;  
4                 registering said at least one distributor as part of a distribution network for  
5                 said content;  
6                 receiving approval from a provider of said content to allow said at least  
7                 one distributor to act as a distributor of said content;  
8                 granting a license to said at least one distributor to act as a distributor of  
9                 said content; and  
10                 providing data to said at least one distributor indicative of said benefit.

1    33.    The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2                 providing an identifier of said content to said at least one distributor.

1    34.    The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2                 providing said content to said at least one distributor.

1    35.    The method of claim 34, wherein said providing said content to said at least one  
2    distributor includes at least one of the following:  
3                 instructing another distributor in said network to provide said content to  
4                 said at least one distributor;  
5                 allowing said at least one distributor to retrieve said content;  
6                 providing data to said at least one distributor indicative of a location where  
7                 said content is located;  
8                 providing a key to said at least one distributor that enables use of said  
9                 content; and  
10                 providing a key to said at least one distributor that enables decryption of  
11                 said content.

1    36.    The method of claim 29, wherein said receiving a benefit based, at least in part,  
2    on said establishing at least one distributor of said content includes at least one of the  
3    following:  
4                 receiving an indication of a location of said benefit;  
5                 receiving a description of said benefit; and  
6                 receiving instructions how to receive said benefit.

1    37.    The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2                 providing to said at least one distributor an indication of a desired attribute  
3                 for a new distributor of said content.

1 38. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2           determining at least one desired attribute for a new distributor of said  
3 content.

1 39. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2           determining at least one attribute of said content.

1 40. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2           receiving data indicative of at least one desired attribute for a new  
3 distributor of said content.

1 41. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2           receiving a notification indicative of availability of said benefit.

1 42. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2           providing a notification upon said establishing at least one distributor of  
3 said content that said at least one distributor has been established.

1 43. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2           monitoring performance of said at least one distributor.

1 44. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2           receiving payment for said content from a recipient of said content.

1 45. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2           receiving payment for said content from said at least one distributor.

1 46. The method of claim 29, further comprising:  
2           providing payment for said content to another party.

1    47.    The method of claim 29, wherein said content is in an electronic format.

1    48.    A method for maintaining a distribution network, comprising:

2                 determining a requirement of a network for distribution of content,  
3    wherein said content is in electronic form and said network includes at least one  
4    distributor of said content;

5                 determining at least one desired attribute for a distributor of said content,  
6    wherein said attribute is based, at least in part, on said requirement; and

7                 providing an indication of said desired attribute.

1    49.    The method of claim 48, wherein said requirement includes at least one of the  
2    following:

3                 a current requirement for said network to respond to requests for said  
4    content;

5                 a current requirement for said network to provide said content to at least  
6    one recipient;

7                 a current requirement for said network to store said content;

8                 a future requirement for said network to respond to requests for said  
9    content;

10                a future requirement for said network to provide said content to at least  
11    one recipient;

12                a future requirement for said network to store said content;

13                a current minimum delivery requirement associated with said content;

14                a current minimum storage requirement associated with said content;

15                an expected minimum delivery requirement associated with said content;

16                and

17                an expected minimum storage requirement associated with said content.

1       50.           The method of claim 48, wherein said requirement includes at least one of  
2 the following:

3                  a minimum level of ability of a distributor in said network to transmit said  
4 content;

5                  a minimum level of ability of a distributor in said network to store said  
6 content;

7                  a minimum percentage of availability of a distributor in said network;

8                  a minimum amount of accessibility of a distributor in said network of said  
9 content by a potential recipient of said content;

10                 a minimum storage capability of a distributor in said network;

11                 a specific physical location of a distributor in said network;

12                 a specific topological location of a distributor in said network;

13                 a specific configuration of hardware used by a distributor in said network  
14 of said content;

15                 a minimum transmission capability of a distributor in said network;

16                 a minimum satisfaction level associated with at least one recipient of said  
17 content from a distributor in said network;

18                 a minimum level of ability by a distributor in said network to respond to  
19 requests from potential recipients of said content; and

20                 a minimum number of distributions of said content by a distributor in said  
21 network.

1       51.       The method of claim 48, wherein said determining at least one desired attribute  
2 for a distributor of said content includes at least one of the following:

3                 determining an attribute that will help said network meet said requirement  
4 if a distributor having said attribute is added to said network; and

5                 determining an attribute that will help said network meet said requirement  
6 if a distributor already in said network develops said attribute.

1    52.    The method of claim 48, wherein said attribute includes at least one of the  
2    following:

3                 an affiliation with a designated organization;  
4                 a minimum mobility characteristic;  
5                 a minimum processing capability;  
6                 a designated hardware configuration;  
7                 a designated software configuration;  
8                 a minimum reliability level;  
9                 a minimum operational characteristic;  
10                a minimum availability to a potential recipient of said content;  
11                a minimum accessibility by a potential recipient of said content;  
12                a minimum storage capability;  
13                a physical location;  
14                a topological location;  
15                a minimum transmission capability; and  
16                a minimum bandwidth.

1    53.    The method of claim 48, further comprising:

2                 providing a benefit to a distributor in said network that develops said  
3                 attribute.

1    54.    The method of claim 48, further comprising:

2                 providing a benefit to a party that establishes a distributor in said network  
3                 that has said attribute.

1    55.    The method of claim 48, further comprising:

2                 providing a notification of a benefit available to a party that establishes a  
3                 distributor in said network that has said attribute.

1    56.    A system for establishing at least one distributor of content, comprising:  
2                 a memory;  
3                 communication port; and  
4                 a processor connected to said memory and said communication port, said  
5                 processor being operative to:  
6                         establish a first distributor of content capable of distributing said  
7                         content via transmission of an electronic signal; and  
8                         provide a benefit to said first distributor as a result of said first  
9                 distributor establishing a second distributor of said content.

1    57.    A system for establishing at least one distributor of content, comprising:  
2                 a memory;  
3                 communication port; and  
4                 a processor connected to said memory and said communication port, said  
5                 processor being operative to:  
6                         establish a distributor of content capable of distributing said  
7                         content via transmission of an electronic signal; and  
8                         receive a benefit as a result of said establishing a distributor of said  
9                 content.

1    58.    A computer program product in a computer readable medium for rewarding a  
2                 distributor of content, comprising:  
3                         first instructions for determining a first distributor of content capable of  
4                         distributing said content via transmission of an electronic signal; and  
5                         second instructions for sending a first benefit to said first distributor as a  
6                 result of said first distributor establishing a second distributor of said content.